

Copley trustees approve joint emergency dispatch deal

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In this file photo, communications specialist Jessica Dolaezal takes a call as she sits in front of a screen used to contact several area police and fire departments at the communications center at a Summit County Police Department. Copley Township, Norton and Barberton are working on a joint dispatch center. (Karen Schiely/Akron Beacon Journal)

COPLEY TWP.: An agreement creating a governing body for a joint emergency services dispatch center for Copley, Barberton and Norton received unanimous approval from township trustees Wednesday.

The Southwest Council of Governments will oversee the creation and management of the new joint dispatch center expected to be operational next year.

With Copley and Barberton signed on, the agreement will be forwarded to Norton. The dispatch center's operations would be located in that city's fire department.

The Southwest Summit Communications Center "will allow the three communities a vehicle by which other shared projects and ideas will be made possible," the agreement states.

Officials have characterized the center as a symbol of regional cooperation with a practical benefit of cost savings. The idea evolved from shared emergency dispatch services started by Copley and Norton at the Copley Police Department more than a year ago.

Trustees also approved a \$300,000 grant agreement with the Ohio Development Services Agency for the Local Government Innovation Fund, which would help pay for the center. Copley is the fiscal agent for the innovation fund.

Each community's share of the approximately \$500,000 cost would be \$70,000 — either cash or in-kind contributions.

Copley Fire Chief Michael Benson said that once the agreement is in place, the next step is expected to be meetings between a representative from each community to create the council and to write its bylaws.

The joint dispatch center's tentative operational date is April 1, but that might be pushed back to June, Benson said.

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